

The same could be said of the performances of the School's students. Under the directorship of Dora Mavor (Moore) and the poet and novelist Charles Sparrow, the students of the '20s retained their former interests while extending their range to comic and topical material. The number of such productions is indicated by a list of one school year's offerings in the student literary magazine Mesolae: "The Land of Heart's Desire, Mrs. Pat and the Law, La Lettre Chargée, L'Oiseau Bleu, a Nativity play, The Maker of Magic, St. George and the Dragon, Overtones, Between the Soup and the Savoury, Two Strings to her [sic] Bow, and Mistress Runaway" (Mesolae 1921: 42). Rachel Lynn Field's Three Pills in a Bottle and Gertrude Jennings' Acid Drops were staged in 1920 and 1921, respectively. In 1922 senior students of the school performed Angier and Musset's The Blue Coat; while a recital offered Tu Quoque and a series of selections (The Cap That Fits, Proverbs in Porcelain, Secrets from the Heart), all by Austin Dobson, along with Square Pegs by Clifford Bax and Keble Howard's Compromising Martha (Programmes MTPL). In 1923, the School put on The Walrus and the Carpenter under the direction of the English tenor, Alfred Heather, as well as Edna Geister's Wild Nell, the Pet of the Plains; while the Social Service Department produced the anonymous Delinquent Girl. Social concern was expressed by two other plays directed by Charles Sparrow. The First of May by Eleanor Rowland Wembridge (of the Women's Protective Association of Cleveland) portrayed the lives of young women clerking in a dime store; while The Horse-Shoe Nail by United States author Frances B. Williams (of the National Child Labor Committee) is a fantasy involving conscription of individuals for national economic service (Programme MTPL). "The scene is laid in the office of the draft board," wrote one reviewer, "and in the interviews is revealed lack of education, lack of thrift, child labor abuse, and Bolshevistic tendencies" (Unattributed clipping MTPL).

The last performance to be staged at the Greek Temple was When Half Gods Go by the Canadian poet (and amateur actor) Norah Holland in the ~~spring~~^{autumn} of 1924 (Unattributed clipping MTPL fiche 162).¹⁸ While the School had frequently invited Canadian poets to lecture and to read, this may well have been the first Canadian play staged by the School or its Players with the exception of Scott Raff's own.¹⁹ Fittingly, it is a play about transition from one era to another. A mystery play opening in "a glade in Olympus," the play shows a classical and mythologic time giving way to the Christian epoch, and ends with Apollo and Diana kneeling at the manger in Bethlehem; and it was staged at the ceremonies to ^{mark} Emma Scott Raff's retirement. An increasing deficit which Margaret Eaton was unwilling to underwrite, and concern on the part of Eaton's management that Emma Scott Raff's philosophical commitments were over-riding their financial directorship, initiated a chain of controversies and changes culminating in her enforced resignation.

The School continued for one year under the temporary principalship of Charlotte Ross, when the city's expropriation of the North Street site for a road-widening programme caused a move to the Yonge Street annex. There was one more year of ambitious dramatic work under Bertram Forsyth and Dixon Wagner (with Jessie Alexander Roberts for elocution) before the Margaret Eaton School was restructured as a programme primarily in physical education; it remained an important centre for women's athletic activity until 1941, becoming the basis for what is now the University of Toronto's School of Physical and Health Education.²⁰ Thus a complete assessment of the contributions of the Margaret Eaton School would consider not only the School's literary and arts curriculum, but its advancement of the modern dance movement in Canada and its contribution to women's sports over a period of forty years. But some preliminary remarks may be made about its significance.

On the death of Emma Scott Raff in 1940, Saturday Night attributed considerable importance to her career: "That the Little Theatre has become so active a cultural factor in every part of Canada is, in part at least, due to the seeds she sowed. Her pupils scattered to every part of Canada and carried with them the inspiration provided by her productions of literary drama" ("Mrs. Nasmith's" 2). It is an interesting and important contradiction, then, that the School and its Players, only a few years past, are completely absent from the surveys of the little theatre undertaken by Carroll Aikins in the November 1928 Canadian Forum and in Betram Brooker's Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-29; and from the "little theatre" columns that would follow in the Forum. Manifestoes rather than reviews, these pieces are resolutely forward-looking, concerned with breaks and exceptions rather than continuities and context. "When We Awake!" was the introduction heralding the new artistic world foreseen by Bertram Brooker.

There has been a similar tendency on the part of Canadian literary and cultural critics to assume that English-Canadian culture was asleep during the transition years; and thus the problem of the contribution of the Margaret Eaton School may best be re-put as a question about its significance to us. There are several reasons why such institutions as the Margaret Eaton School need to be re-entered into the cultural accounts. First, the study of popular and para-institutional cultural structures can usefully expand and inflect the historical picture. In particular, women's activities are overlooked and understudied.²¹ Such an incorporation can provide not only depth and background, but will raise questions about the paradigms underpinning our current histories. Second, the lack of examination of turn-of-the-century literature and arts has occasioned a chronology in which modernism is seen as an epistemic break or a latter-day importation of a "high" modernism developed elsewhere, rather than as a multi-

directed movement with roots in nineteenth-century adaptations of symbolism and in an earlier set of post-colonial cultural responses. Without an understanding of the complex and contradictory culture of the transition years, we know little about the Canadian modern, and the ways the modern was made.

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Abbreviations:

DMM -- Dora Mavor Moore Papers, Fisher Library, University of Toronto

E -- T. Eaton Company Records, Public Archives of Ontario

H -- Toronto Heliconian Club Papers, Public Archives of Ontario
MTPL -- Theatre
Collection, Central Reference Library, Metropolitan Toronto Public Library

UTA -- University of Toronto Archives

VUA -- Victoria University Archives

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Notes

1. A precise date for the origin of the Arts and Letters Club Players is difficult to ascertain, and varies according to whether discussions, skits, or full-fledged productions are considered the starting point. Grace dates the founding of the players in 1905 (75) although this is by far the earliest date given and would predate the establishment of the Club proper by three years. Lane sees the Club as beginning "serious theatrical activity" in 1908 (139); Scott refers to the series of Egyptian friezes presented in Jan. 1911 (1968: 87). The club's own retrospective dates the origin with a performance of Enoch Arden in Dec. 1910 (Arts and Letters n.p.).

2. Scott Raff used the professional name "Mrs. Scott Raff" for much of her life; at times her first name is spelled "Ema." In 1916 she married Colonel George Nasmith, a public health officer and keen member of the Associate Players and the Arts and Letters Club, later honoured by the King for his invention of the gas mask.

3. Significant material appears to have disappeared, such as Scott Raff's play The Message and her elocution text The Speaking Voice used at times at the School (Calendar 1921-1922 35). Apparently she also wrote a memoir of Margaret Eaton (Toronto Daily Star March 20, 1933). Like many recitationists, Scott Raff wrote her own material; a review of one recital notes two sketches of her own composition (Toronto Globe May 28, 1901) and a recital programme for March 1925 lists her "Storiettes" (DMM box 3).

4. It was used for meetings and productions by the University College Women's Dramatic Club; while the Heliconian Club used the hall and the principal's studio for functions and recitals. Roy Mitchell staged two plays for the Women's Art Association of Canada in May 1916 in the Greek Theatre. The programme lists Shaw's Overruled as a first Canadian and a second North American production; Giuseppe Giacosa's Sacred Ground may also have been a Canadian premiere (Programmes MTPL).

5. It is worth remembering the climate of opinion of the day. Emma Scott Raff apparently came under strong criticism for advocating dramatic instruction for young women, when the school occupied temporary quarters in a Baptist Church basement. In 1910, the judges of the Earl Grey competition were equally sceptical about the range of women's dramatic activity. "Without posing as purists," they wrote of the controversial farce A Country Mouse "we think there are certain plays which pass current in the theatre of to-day [sic] which should not under any circumstances be staged by amateur companies containing young and inexperienced girls....it can easily be seen that any father might reasonably object to his daughter taking part in so cynical a production, the very humour of which turns on a lack of modesty and of respect for the established conventions of morality" (Earl Grey 121). Two years later, a commission was struck to look into the behaviour of women in the Annesley Hall residences: late nights, lack of chaperonage and --especially-- attendance at the theatre are causes for concern (Documents). It is perfectly symptomatic that C.B. Sissons, in his history of Victoria, conflates Raff's attempts to expand the college's offerings in elocution and physical education with this scandal in the residences (242 ff.).

6. Morgan (1924) lists Raff as having attended Victoria and University colleges, although her name does not appear in their examination lists.

7. Textbooks for Emma Scott Raff's years are unknown; but the Conservatory Calendar of 1910-11 lists primarily works by Curry (Toronto Conservatory Calendar 1910-11 21).

8. Delsartism is little known now, and usually only in the negative or comic sense. In The Music Man, cultural con-artist Professor Harold Hill wins over the mayor's wife by commenting that her ankle movements are "perfect Delsarte." She organizes the River City Ladies Eurythmic Club, whose tunic-clad members strike poses copied from Grecian urns, determined to be the success of the ice-cream sociable. However, Delsartism influenced a number of nineteenth-century writers and actors; most importantly, its principles underpin the modern dance movement (see Shawn). As the example from The Music Man will indicate, Delsartism's popularity was also its demise.

9. Indicative of this interest is a programme from one of Scott Raff's own annual recitals, in December 1912. Entitled "Symbolism," it featured readings from Ibsen, Alma-Tadema and Maeterlinck; Ernest MacMillan arranged a musical programme of Beethoven, Chopin, and Stojowski (Programme DMM box 60).

10. Emma Scott Raff was active in other areas of theatrical activity. She was one of the charter members of the Heliconian Club -- the women's counterpart to the Arts and Letters Club, founded in 1909 -- and remained a member of its drama section until her death. She was also the educational advisor to the Drama League of Toronto (Scott 1966: 249).

11. Jessie Alexander Roberts was to abandon her career as a teacher of elocution for a life as a travelling recitationist, whose one-woman shows earned her the title "Queen of Elocution." She is remembered by Lorna Sheard, a fellow Heliconian Club member: "Anyone who, consistently, over half a century, has played one-night stands, -- (for that's what her genteel barns-storming [sic] amounted to) -- and whose trains on her arrival were invariably met by a crowd of cheering fans, ever can be designated a Professional, with a capital P. She gave her collections of recitations (which were published subsequently) in drawing-rooms, schools, churches, prisons and hospitals, as well as on the boards of proper stages" (Typescript Nov. 8, 1970. H-MU 8092 file 11). Jessie Alexander Roberts' The Canadian Elocutionist was a best-seller; the "Confidential Preface and Reminiscences" to her Platform Sketches recounts many adventures.

12. Examining the vogue for recitation and elocutionary study in the transition years, Frank Croft amusingly recaptures the style of the old-time platform artists. "When an elocutionist looked over the heads of the audience and showed the whites of the pupils below the eyes, it was supposed to mean that she was looking into a great distance. Looking straight ahead was Fate. Eyes turned to the side and upwards denoted reflection. . . . The sky called for a great sweeping arc with the arms, waves were expressed by a gentle undulation of the wrists; when sky and stars were mentioned it called for the sweeping gesture with the arms plus a twinkly movement with the fingers" (45).

13. Charlotte Ross, a graduate of both University College and the Sorbonne, was an important fighter for co-education. She was also a founder of the University Women's Club and the Women's Art Association.

14. Netta Syrett will be an unfamiliar name in this list, but her works appear regularly on the MES roster. One of the English "New Woman" novelists of the transition years and a Yellow-Book regular, Syrett also spent five years as a pioneer in children's theatre work (Ardis 168).

15. The personnel of the MES and its Players over-lapped with other groups. Instructor Topley Thomas played female leads for the Arts and Letters Club; students from the School were early involved with Hart House Theatre, two of them appearing in the The Queen's Enemies and the Chester plays (ESR report, Jan. 1920. E- 22-6). Lorna Sheard, later to be significant figure in the development of the Canadian little theatre movement, played consistently in Hart House productions during her 1918-20 student years at the School and later (Biographical files H-MU892). Enthusiastic amateur Basil Morgan played in all three groups as well as the School's recitals.

16. The classical ideal applied to women was emancipatory, for it rationalized education of women's bodies and intellects. Further, a reworking of classical materials animated the work of many early women modernists (Nathalie Barney and H.D., for example).

17. Betty Lee lists the Players as presenting The Society for the Protection of Suffering Servants in the 1908 competition (71), but this was a production of the Frances de Wolfe Fenwick Company (Earl Grey 17).

18. If this was a performance and not a reading -- the details are unclear -- it would predate the staging noted by Scott, who lists a performance by the Eaton's Girls Club in December of 1930 (1968: 117).

19. It would be possible to include in this category the production of work by David Belasco, formerly from Victoria.

20. One programme from the 1925-26 season shows The Scientific Age (described as "a study in Expressionism in the style of the New Russian Theatre"); a "melodramatic interlude" with the disturbing title of The Blood on Bobby's Head; as well as Hope Holmsted's The Trust of the White Race, whose characters bore names such as "The Redskin" and "Spirit of the North Wind" (Programme E - 229-162-0-694).

21. Compare, for example, the attention given to the all-male Arts and Letters Club with that paid the women's Heliconian Club, its exact counterpart and contemporary.



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